

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE HMONG PEOPLE, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY
IN THE UNITED STATES, WISCONSIN AND DANE COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Hmong people, an ethnic group originally from Northern China, have a rich cultural heritage, including unique languages, traditions, and customs that date back more than 3,000 years. Hmong people are believed to have migrated from the Yellow River basin and currently live mostly in the mountainous regions of Southern China. The Hmong faced significant persecution during various dynasties, leading to migrations within China and to neighboring countries like Southeast Asia. Despite these challenges, the Hmong have maintained distinct cultural practices, including traditional clothing and festivals; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong people came to the United States as political refugees—primarily from areas of Laos beginning in the mid-1970s—after Hmong soldiers fought bravely alongside U.S. soldiers during the war in Southeast Asia and suffered political persecution in their homeland. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. enlisted the help of the Hmong against Communist forces, an effort documented by the CIA known as the “Secret War,” also known as the Laotian Civil War. After this period, the diaspora began and more than 130,000 Hmong initially settled in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 census reported the U.S. Hmong American population has risen to over 368,000 with around 80 percent still living in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, the Hmong represent more than one third of the state’s Asian population, with over 70,000 Hmong in the state in 2023, and the Hmong language as the third most commonly spoken language in WI; and

WHEREAS, from the 1990s to today, the Hmong population in Wisconsin has increased significantly, with the early growth of the population due to secondary migration from other U.S. locations, as well as continuing arrivals from refugee camps. These factors, along with the growth of generations of Hmong families in the U.S., has led to the Hmong people, culture, and traditions occupying an important place in communities across the U.S., Wisconsin, and Dane County; and

WHEREAS, Hmong families and individuals are very well-established in communities across Wisconsin. In 2010, for instance, over 50% of the Hmong population owned their own homes. Hmong community cohesion is strong, the population is young and growing, and the Hmong increasingly contribute to the culture, economy, and communities in which they live. Hmong community members work across all sectors, including manufacturing, education, health care, social assistance and owning their own businesses contributing to the economic fabric of Dane County; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong people enrich our communities in Wisconsin through the preservation of the unique and special attributes of their culture, traditions, and language. The Hmong have shared with Wisconsin and Dane County the beauty of their music, cuisine, and art, including through the richly-detailed story cloths, or *paj ntaub*, which serve as a visual historical record of the Hmong people, the Secret War, their diaspora, and the sacrifices and struggles of migration and resettlement; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong have a strong sense of community in which each person has a role and a responsibility to ensure their actions benefit the whole, including their families and neighbors. Hmong elders are respected as wise teachers. Families, clans, and communities all play a part in providing mutual aid, as well as teaching and preserving the Hmong cultural traditions and language and sharing them with non-Hmong residents. In addition to maintaining cultural preservation, they highly value and respect community leadership. Throughout their existence, they have maintained the value of elders as leaders through establishing leadership roles, including in WI, starting with Pakeng Vang who is President of the WI Hmong 18 Clan Council. In Dane County, each clan has its own leadership, known as Nres Xeem (Clan Leaders in Dane County), listed as follows: Vang Clan–Nyiaj Hwm Vaj; Lee Clan–Paj Neeb Lis; Lor & Pha Clan–Be Jack Lauj; Thao Clan–Paj Yeeb Thoj; Vue Clan–Peter Vwj; Xiong Clan–Tswv Hwm Xyooj; Yang Clan–Cog Tsua Yaj; Cha Clan–Fue Steven Tsab; and Moua Clan–Npliaj Vws Muas; and

WHEREAS, the first Hmong families to reside in and contribute to life in Dane County moved to the Bayview Community Center in 1979 and 1980, with more families arriving in the 1990's and early 2000's. Yang Cha and his family were among the first Hmong to reside in Bayview Community Center where he still lives today; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong people have contributed to the enrichment of Dane County through non-profit business owners who serve and run programs to protect the elderly and youth by creating culturally relevant services like Manila Kue, founder and CEO of Grand Journey, provides CCS services for Hmong and Southeast Asian elders through partnership with Dane County Health and Human Services. Doua Vang, who was the former Director of Hmong Mental Health Program a program made possible through Journey Mental Health, and is now the Executive Director of the SE Asian Healing Center. In addition to the work of Mai Zong & Cher Peng Her, who started the Hmong Institute, which focuses not only on mental health for Hmong elders but also runs the Hmong Learning Cultural Enrichment Program, an educational program focused on the Hmong culture and identity for children in kindergarten to 8th grade; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong people have contributed richly to the diverse narratives that exist in Dane County public schools with Gao Nou Vang-Vue as the first school principal of Hmong descent in the Madison Metropolitan School District, and also the first to lead the only Hmong-English Language Immersion Program in the State of Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, Tom Beu Xiong, was one of the first Hmong Social Workers in Dane County, working closely with Hmong families and elders and specializing in long-term care, opening the door for many other Hmong persons to gain employment in Dane County; and

WHEREAS, despite the many hardships of assimilating to the U.S., the Hmong people have maintained their cultural traditions through the celebration of the Hmong New Year. Since the 1980's when the Hmong people moved to Dane County, they have kept their annual celebration of the Hmong New Year at the Alliant Energy Center. This celebration is not only a diverse experience that celebrates the diaspora of the Hmong people, it is also a visually stunning display of the richness of their clothing and the uniqueness of their resilience. The Madison Hmong New Year has been hosted and organized by the WI Hmong Association since 2013 and before that by various Hmong leaders throughout Dane County. With the leadership of the WI Hmong Association, its current President Neej Hwm Yaj along with its current officers, former President, and all former officers, they have taken the Madison Hmong New Year further with their vision of cultural preservation and love for their heritage and identity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors recognizes 2025 as the 50-year anniversary of the Hmong people, culture, and community in the United States, Wisconsin, and Dane County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors celebrates the myriad ways in which the Hmong people have enriched and served the Dane County community in the last 50 years, and affirms our friendship and support for the Hmong community into the future.

Patrick Miles, Chair
Dane County Board of Supervisor

Signed and sealed before me this
_____ day of _____, 2025.

Scott McDonell, Dane County Clerk